THE DRUMS OF JEOPARDY

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Chapter 1

A fast train drew into Albany, on the New York Central, from the West. It was three-thirty of a chill March morning in the first year of peace. A pall of fog lay over the world so heavy that it beaded the face and hands and deposited a fairy diamond dust upon wool. The station lights had the visibility of stars, and like the stars were without refulgence—a pale golden aureola, perhaps three feet in diameter, and beyond, nothing. The few passengers who alighted and the train itself had the same nebulosity of drab fish in a dim aquarium.

Among the passengers to detrain was a man in a long black coat. The high collar was up. The man wore a derby hat, well down upon his head, after the English mode. An English kitbag, battered and scarred, swung heavily from his hand. He immediately strode for the station wall and stood with his back to it. He was almost invisible. He remained motionless until the other detrained passengers swam past, until the red tail lights of the last coach vanished into the deeps; then he rushed for the exit to the street.

Away toward the far end of the platform there appeared a shadowy patch in the fog. It grew and presently took upon itself the shape of a man. For one so short and squat and thick his legs possessed remarkable agility, for he reached the street just as the other man stopped at the side of a taxicab.

The fool! As if such a movement had not been anticipated. Sixteen thousand miles, always eastward, on horses, camels, donkeys, trains, and ships; down China to the sea, over that to San Francisco, thence across this bewildering stretch of cities and plains called the United States, always

and ever toward New York—and the fool thought he could escape! Thought he was flying, when in truth he was being driven toward a wall in which there would be no breach! Behind and in front the net was closing. Up to this hour he had been extremely clever in avoiding contact. This was his first stupid act—thought the fog would serve as an impenetrable cloak.

Meantime, the other man reached into the taxicab and awoke the sleeping chauffeur.

"A hotel," he said.

"Which one?"

"Any one will do."

"Yes, sir. Two dollars."

"When we arrive. No; I'll take the bag inside with me."

Inside the cab the fare chuckled. For those who fished there would be no fish in the net. This fog—like a kindly hand reaching down from heaven!

Five minutes later the taxicab drew up in front of a hotel. The unknown stepped out, took a leather purse from his pocket and carefully counted out in silver two dollars and twenty cents, which he poured into the chauffeur's palm.

"Thank you, sir."

"You are an American?"

"Sure! I was born in this burg."

"Like the idea?"

"Huh?"

"The idea of being an American?"

"I should say yes! This is one grand little gob o' mud, believe me! It's going to be dry in a little while, and then it will be some grand little old brick. Say, let me give you a tip! The gas in this joint is extra if you blow it out!"

Grinning, the chauffeur threw on the power and wheeled away into the fog.

His late fare followed the vehicle with his gaze until it reached the vanishing point, then he laughed. An American cockney! He turned and entered the hotel. He marched

resolutely up to the desk and roused the sleeping clerk, who swung round the register. The unknown without hesitance inscribed his name, which was John Hawksley. But he hesitated the fraction of a second before adding his place of residence—London.

"A room with a bath, if you please; second flight. Have the man call me at seven."

"Yes, sir. Here, boy!"

Sleepily the bellboy lifted the battered kitbag and led the way to the elevator.

"Bawth!" said the night clerk, as the elevator door slithered to the latch. "Bawth! The old dear!"

He returned to his chair, hoping that he would not be disturbed again until he was relieved.

What do we care, so long as we don't know? What's the stranger to us but a fleeting shadow? The Odysseys that pass us every day, and we none the wiser!

The clerk had not properly floated away into dreams when he was again roused. Resentfully he opened his eyes. A huge fist covered with a fell of black hair rose and fell. Attached to this fist was an arm, and joined to that were enormous shoulders. The clerk's trailing, sleep-befogged glance paused when it reached the newcomer's face. The jaws and cheeks and upper lip were blue-black with a beard that required extra-tempered razors once a day. Black eyes that burned like opals, a bullet-shaped head well cropped, and a pudgy nose broad in the nostrils. Because this second arrival wore his hat well forward the clerk was not able to discern the pinched forehead of the fanatic. Not wholly unpleasant, not particularly agreeable; the sort of individual one preferred to walk round rather than bump into. The clerk offered the register, and the squat man scratched his name impatiently, grabbed the extended key, and trotted to the elevator.

"Ah," mused the clerk, "we have with us Mr. Poppy—Popo —" He stared at the signature close up. "Hanged if I can

make it out! It looks like some new brand of soft drink we'll be having after July first. Greek or Bulgarian. Anyhow, he didn't awsk for a bawth. Looks as if he needed one, too. Here, boy!"
"Ye-ah!"
"Take a peek at this John Hancock."
"Gee! That must be the guy who makes that drugstore drink—Boolzac."
The clerk swung out, but missed the boy's head by a hair. The boy stood off, grinning.
"Well, you ast me!"
"All right. If anybody else comes in tell 'em we're full up. I'll be a wreck to-morrow without my usual beauty sleep." The clerk dropped into his chair again and elevated his feet to the radiator.
"Want me t' git a pillow for yuh?"
"No back talk!"—drowsily.
"Oh! boy, but I got one on you!"
"What?"
"This Boolzac guy didn't have no baggage, and yuh give 'im the key without little ol' three-per in advance."
"No grip?"
"Nix. Not a toot'brush in sight."
"Well, the damage is done. I might as well go to sleep."
It was not premeditated on the part of the clerk to give the squat man the room adjoining that of Hawksley's. The key had been nearest his hand. But the squat man trembled with excitement when he noted that it was stamped 214. He had taken particular pains to search the register for Hawksley's number before rousing the clerk. He hadn't counted on any such luck as this. His idea had been merely to watch the door of Room 212.
He had the feline foot, as they say. He moved about lightly and without sound in the dark. Almost at once he approached one of the two doors and put his ear to the panel. Running water. The fool had time to take a bath!

A plan flashed into his head. Why not end the affair here and now, and reap the glory for himself? What mattered the net if the fish swam into your hand? Wasn't this particularly his affair? It was the end, not the means. A close touch in Hong-Kong, but the fool had slipped away. But there, in the next room, assured that he had escaped—it would be easy. The squat man tiptoed to the window. Luck of luck, there was a fire-escape platform! He would let half an hour pass, then he would act. The ape, with his British mannerisms! Death to the breed, root and branch! He sat down to wait.

On the other side of the wall the bather finished his ablutions. His body was graceful, vigorous, and youthful, tinted a golden bronze. His nose was hawky; his eyes a Latin brown, alert and roving, though there was a hint of weariness in them, the pressure of long, racking hours of ceaseless vigilance. His top hair was a glossy black inclined to curl; but the four days' growth of beard was as blond as a ripe chestnut burr. In spite of this mark of vagabondage there were elements of beauty in the face. The expanse of the brow and the shape of the head were intellectual. The mouth was pleasure-loving, but the nose and the jaw neutralized this.

After he had towelled himself he reached down for a brown leather pouch which lay on the three-legged bathroom stool. It was patently a tobacco pouch, but there was evidently something inside more precious than Saloniki. He held the pouch on his palm and stared at it as if it contained some jinn clamouring to be let out. Presently he broke away from this fascination and rocked his body, eyes closed—like a man suffering unremitting pain.

"God's curse on them!" he whispered, opening his eyes. He raised the pouch swiftly, as though he intended dashing it to the tiled floor; but his arm sank gently. After all, he would be a fool to destroy them. They were future bread and butter.

He would soon have their equivalent in money—money that would bring back no terrible recollections.

Strange that every so often, despite the horror, he had to take them out and gaze at them. He sat down upon the stool, spread a towel across his knees, and opened the pouch. He drew out a roll of cotton wool, which he unrolled across the towel. Flames! Blue flames, red, yellow, violet, and green—precious stones, many of them with histories that reached back into the dim centuries, histories of murder and loot and envy. The young man had imagination—perhaps too much of it. He saw the stones palpitating upon lovely white and brown bosoms; he saw bloody and greedy hands, the red sack of towns; he heard the screams of women and the raucous laughter of drunken men. Murder and loot.

At the end of the cotton wool lay two emeralds about the size of half dollars and half an inch in thickness, polished, and as vividly green as a dragonfly in the sun, fit for the turban of Schariar, spouse of Scheherazade.

Rodin would have seized upon the young man's attitude—the limp body, the haggard face—hewn it out of marble and called it Conscience. The possessor of the stones held this attitude for three or four minutes. Then he rolled up the cotton wool, jammed it into the pouch, which he hung to his neck by a thong, and sprang to his feet. No more of this brooding; it was sapping his vitality; and he was not yet at his journey's end.

He proceeded to the bedroom, emptied the battered kitbag, and began to dress. He put on heavy tan walking shoes, gray woollen stockings, gray knickerbockers, gray flannel shirt, and a Norfolk jacket minus the third button.

Ah, that button! He fingered the loose threads which had aforetime snugged the button to the wool. The carelessness of a tailor had saved his life. Had that button held, his bones at this moment would be reposing on the hillside in far-away Hong-Kong. Evidently Fate had some definite

plans regarding his future, else he would not be in this room, alive. But what plans? Why should Fate bother about him further? She had strained the orange to the last drop. Why protect the pulp? Perhaps she was only making sport of him, lulling him into the belief that eventually he might win through. One thing, she would never be able to twist his heart again. You cannot fill a cup with water beyond the brim. And God knew that his cup had been full and bitter and red.

His hand swept across his eyes as if to brush away the pictures suddenly conjured up. He must keep his thoughts off those things. There was a taint of madness in his blood, and several times he had sensed the brink at his feet. But God had been kind to him in one respect: The blood of his glorious mother predominated.

How many were after him, and who? He had not been able to recognize the man that night in Hong-Kong. That was the fate of the pursued: one never dared pause to look back, while the pursuers had their man before them always. If only he could have broken through into Greece, England would have been easy. The only door open had been in the East. It seemed incredible that he should be standing in this room, but three hours from his goal.

America! The land of the free and the brave! And the irony of it was that he must seek in America the only friends he had in the world. All the Englishmen he had known and loved were dead. He had never made friends with the French, though he loved France. In this country alone he might successfully lose himself and begin life anew. The British were British and the French were French; but in this magnificent America they possessed the tenacity of the one and the gayety of the other—these joyous, unconquered, speed-loving Americans.

He took up the overcoat. Under the light it was no longer black but a very deep green. On both sleeves there were narrow bands of a still deeper green, indicating that gold or

silver braid had once befrogged the cuffs. Inside, soft silky Persian lamb; and he ran his fingers over the fur thoughtfully. The coat was still impregnated with the strong odour of horse. He cast it aside, never to touch it again. From the discarded small coat he extracted a black wallet and opened it. That passport! He wondered if there existed another more cleverly forged. It would not have served an hour west of the Hindenburg Line; but in the East and here in America no one had questioned it. In San Francisco they had scarcely glanced at it, peace having come. Besides this passport the wallet contained a will, ten bonds, a custom appraiser's receipt and a sheaf of gold bills. The will, however, was perhaps one of the most astonishing documents conceivable. It left unreservedly to Capt. John Hawksley the contents of the wallet!

Within three hours of his ultimate destination! He knew all about great cities. An hour after he left the train, if he so willed, he could lose himself for all time.

From the bottom of the kitbag he dug up a blue velours case, which after a moment's hesitation he opened. Medals incrusted with precious stones; but on the top was the photograph of a charming girl, blonde as ripe wheat, and arrayed for the tennis court. It was this photograph he wanted. Indifferently he tossed the case upon the centre table, and it upset, sending the medals about with a ring and a tinkle.

The man in the next room heard this sound, and his eye roved desperately. Some way to peer into yonder room! But there was no transom, and he would not yet dare risk the fire escape. The young man raised the photograph to his lips and kissed it passionately.

Then he hid it in the lining of his coat, there being a convenient rent in the inside pocket.

"I must not think!" he murmured. "I must not!"

He became the hunted man again. He turned a chair upend and placed it under the window. He tipped another in front

of the door. On the threshold of the bathroom door he deposited the water carafe and the glasses. His bed was against the connecting door. No man would be able to enter unannounced. He had no intention of letting himself fall asleep. He would stretch out and rest. So he lit his pipe, banked the two pillows, switched out the light, and lay down. Only the intermittent glow of his pipe coal could be seen. Near the journey's end; and no more tight-rope walking, with death at both ends, and death staring up from below. Queer how the human being clung to life. What had he to live for? Nothing. So far as he was concerned, the world had come to an end. Sporting instinct; probably that was it; couldn't make up his mind to shuffle off this mortal coil until he had beaten his enemies. English university education had dulled the bite of his natural fatalism. To carry on for the sport of it; not to accept fate but to fight it.

By chance his hand touched his spiky chin. Nevertheless, he would have to enter New York just as he was. He had left his razor in a Pullman washroom hurriedly one morning. He dared not risk a barber's chair, especially these American chairs, that stretched one out in a most helpless manner.

Slowly his pipe sank toward his breast. The weary body was overcoming the will. A sound broke the pleasant spell. He sat up, tense. Someone had entered through the window and stumbled over the chair! Hawksley threw on the light.

Chapter 2

When the day clerk arrived the night clerk sleepily informed him that the guest in Room 214 was without baggage and had not paid in advance.
"Lave a call?"
"No. I thought I'd put you wise. I didn't notice that the man had no grip until he was in the elevator."
"All right. I'll send the bell-hop captain up with a fake call to see if the man's still there."
When the captain—late of the A.E.F. in France—returned to the office he was mildly excited.
"Gee, there's been a whale of a scrap in Room 212. The chambermaid let me in."
"Murder?" whispered the clerks in unison.
"Murder your granny! Naw! Just a fight between 212 and 214, because both of 'em have flown the roost. But take a peek at what I found on the table."
It was a case of blue velours. The boy threw back the lid dramatically.
"War medals?"
"If they are I never piped 'em before. They ain't French or British." The captain of the bell-boys scratched his head ruminatively. "Gee, I got it! Orders, that's what they all 'em. Kings pay 'em out Saturdays when the pay roll is nix. Will you pipe the diamonds and rubies? There's your room rents, monseer."
The day clerk, who considered himself a judge, was of the opinion that there were two or three thousand dollars tied up in the stones. It was a police affair. Some ambassador had been robbed, and the Britisher and the Greek or Bulgarian were mixed up in it. Loot.
"I thought the war was over," said the night clerk.

"The shootin' is over, that's all," said the captain of the bellboys, sagely.
What had happened in Room 212? A duel of wits rather than of physical contact. Hawksley realized instantly that here was the crucial moment. Caught and overpowered, he was lost. If he shouted for help and it came, he was lost. Once the police took a hand in the affair, the newspaper publicity that would follow would result in the total ruin of all his hopes. There was only one chance—to finish this affair outside the hotel, in some fog-dimmed street. There leaped into his mind, obliquely and queerly, a picture in one of Victor Hugo's tales—Quasimodo. And there he stood, in every particular save the crooked back. And on the top of this came the recollection that he had seen the man before… . The torches! The red torches and the hobnailed boots!
There began an odd game, a dancing match, which the young man led adroitly, always with his thought upon the open window. There would be no shooting; Quasimodo would not want the police either. Half a dozen times his fingers touched futilely the dancing master's coat. Bank and forth across the room, over the bed, round the stand and chairs. Persistently, as if he understood the young man's manoeuvres, the squat individual kept to the window side of the room.
An inspiration brought the affair to an end. Hawksley snatched up the bedclothes and threw them as the ancient retiarius threw his net. He managed to win to the lower platform of the fire escape before Quasimodo emerged.
There was a fourteen-foot drop to the street, and the man with the golden stubble on his chin and cheeks swung for a moment to gauge his landing. Quasimodo came after with the agility of an ape. The race down the street began with about a hundred yards in between.
Down the hill they went, like phantoms. The distance did not widen. Bears will run amazingly fast and for a long

while. The quarry cut into Pearl Street for a block, turned a corner, and soon vaguely espied the Hudson River. He made for this.

To the mind of Quasimodo this flight had but one significance—he was dealing with an arrant coward; and he based his subsequent acts upon this premise, forgetting that brave men run when need says must. It would have surprised him exceedingly to learn that he was not driving, that he was being led. Hawksley wanted his enemy alone, where no one would see to interfere. Red torches and hobnailed boots! For once the two bloods, always more or less at war, merged in a common purpose—to kill this beast, to grind the face of him into pulp! Red torches and hobnailed boots!

Presently one of the huge passenger boats, moored for the winter, loomed up through the fog; and toward this Hawksley directed his steps. He made a flying leap aboard and vanished round the deckhouse to the river side.

Quasimodo laughed as he followed. It was as if the tobacco pouch and the appraiser's receipt were in his own pocket; and broad rivers made capital graveyards. They two alone in the fog! He whirled round the deckhouse—and backed on his heels to get his balance. Directly in front, in a very understandable pose, was the intended victim, his jaw jutting, his eyelids narrowed.

Quasimodo tried desperately to reach for his pistol; but a bolt of lightning stopped the action. There is something peculiar about a blow on the nose, a good blow. The Anglo-Saxon peoples alone possess the counterattack—a rush. To other peoples concentration of thought is impossible after the impact. Instinctively Quasimodo's hands flew to his face. He heard a laugh, mirthless and terrible. Before he could drop his hands from his face-blows, short and boring, from this side and from that, over and under. The squat man was brave enough; simply he did not know how to fight in this manner. He was accustomed to the use of steel

and the hobnails on his boots. He struck wildly, swinging his arms like a Flemish mill in a brisk wind.

Some of his blows got home, but these provoked only sardonic laughter.

Wild with rage and pain he bored in. He had but one chance—to get this shadow in his gorilla-like arms. He lacked mental flexibility. An idea, getting into his head, stuck; it was not adjustable. Like an arrow sped from the bowstring, it had to fulfill its destiny. It never occurred to him to take to his heels, to get space between himself and this enemy he had so woefully underestimated. Ten feet, and he might have been able to whirl, draw his pistol, and end the affair.

The coup de grace came suddenly: a blow that caught Quasimodo full on the point of the jaw. He sagged and went sprawling upon his face. The victor turned him over and raised a heel… . No! He was neither Prussian nor Sudanese black. He was white; and white men did not stamp in the faces of fallen enemies.

But there was one thing a white man might do in such a case without disturbing the ethical, and he proceeded about it forthwith: Draw the devil's fangs; render him impotent for a few hours. He deliberately knelt on one of the outspread arms and calmly emptied the insensible man's pockets. He took everything—watch, money, passport, letters, pistol, keys—rose and dropped them into the river. He overlooked Quasimodo's belt, however. The Anglo-Saxon idea was top hole. His fists had saved his life.

Chapter 3

Hawksley heard the panting of an engine and turned his head. Dimly he saw a giant bridge and a long drab train moving across it. He picked up the fallen man's cap and tried it on. Not a particularly good fit, but it would serve. He then trotted round the deckhouse to the street side, jumped to the wharf, and sucking the cracked knuckles of his right hand fell into a steady dogtrot which carried him to the station he had left so hopefully an hour and a half gone.

An accommodation train eventually deposited him in Poughkeepsie, where he purchased a cap and a sturdy walking stick. The stubble on his chin and cheeks began to irritate him intensely, but he could not rid himself of the idea that a barber's chair would be inviting danger. He was now tolerably certain that from one end of the continent to the other his presence was known. His life and his property, they would be after both. Even now there might be men in this strange town seeking him. The closer he got to New York, the more active and wide-awake they would become.

He walked the streets, his glance constantly roving. But apparently no one paid the least attention to him. Finally he returned to the railway station; and at six o'clock that evening he left the platform of the 125th Street Station, and appraised covertly the men who accompanied him to the street. He felt assured that they were all Americans. Probably they were; but there are still some stray fools of American birth who cannot accept the great American doctrine as the only Ararat visible in this present flood. Perhaps one of these accompanied Hawksley to the street. Whatever he was, one had upon order met every south-going train since seven o'clock that morning, when

Quasimodo, paying from the gold hidden in his belt, had sent forth the telegraphic alarm. The man hurried across the street and followed Hawksley by matching his steps. His business was merely to learn the other's destination and then to report.

Across the earth a tempest had been loosed; but Ariel did not ride it, Caliban did. The scythe of terror was harvesting a type; and the innocent were bending with the guilty.

Suddenly Hawksley felt young, revivified, free. He had arrived. Surmounting indescribable hazards and hardships he walked the pavement of New York. In an hour the mutable quicksands of a great city would swallow him forever. Free! He wanted to stroll about, peer into shop windows, watch the amazing electric signs, dally; but he still had much to accomplish.

He searched for a telephone sign. It was necessary that he find one immediately. He had once spent six weeks in and about this marvellous city, and he had a vague recollection of the blue-and-white enamel signs. Shortly he found one. It was a pay station in the rear of a news and tobacco shop.

He entered a booth, but discovered that he had no five-cent pieces in his purse. He hurried out to the girl behind the cigar stand. She was exhibiting a box of cigars to a customer, who selected three, paid for them, and walked away. Hawksley, boiling with haste to have his affair done, flung a silver coin toward the girl.

"Five-cent pieces!"

"Will you take them with you or shall I send them?" asked the girl, earnestly.

"I beg pardon!"

"Any particular kind of ribbon you want the box tied with?"

"I beg your pardon!" repeated Hawksley, harried and bewildered. "But I'm in a hurry—"

"Too much of a hurry to leave out the bark when you ask a favour? I make change out of courtesy. And you all bark at me Nickel! Nickel! as if that was my job."

"A thousand apologies!"—contritely.
"And don't make it any worse by suggesting a movie after supper. My mother never lets me go out after dark."
"I rather fancy she's quite sensible. Still, you seem able to take care of yourself. I might suggest—"
"With that black eye? Nay, nay! I'll bet somebody's brother gave it to you."
"Venus was not on that occasion in ascendancy. Thank you for the change." Hawksley swung on his heel and reentered the booth.
A great weariness oppressed him. A longing, almost irresistible, came to him to go out and cry aloud: "Here I am! Kill me! I am tired and done!" For he had recognized the purchaser of the cigars as one of the men who had left the 125th Street Station at the same time as he. He remembered distinctly that this man had been in a hurry. Perhaps the whole dizzy affair was reacting upon his imagination psychologically and turning harmless individuals into enemies.
"Hello!" said a man's voice over the wire.
"Is Mr. Rathbone there?"
"Captain Rathbone is with his regiment at Coblenz, sir."
"Coblenz?"
"Yes, sir. I do not expect his return until near midsummer, sir. Who is this talking?"
"Have you opened a cable from Yokohama?"
"This is Mr. Hawksley!" The voice became excited.
"Oh, sir! You will come right away. I alone understand, sir. You will remember me when you see me. I'm the captain's butler, sir—Jenkins. He cabled back to give you the entire run of the house as long as you desired it. He advised me to notify you that he had also prepared his banker against your arrival. Have your luggage sent here at once, sir. Dinner will be at your convenience."
Hawksley's body relaxed. A lump came into his throat. Here was a friend, anyhow, ready to serve him though he was

thousands of miles away.
When he could trust himself to speak he said: "Sorry. It will be impossible to accept the hospitality at present. I shall call in a few days, however, to establish my identity. Thank you. Good evening."
"Just a moment, sir. I may have an important cable to transmit to you. It would be wise to leave me your address, sir."
Hawksley hesitated a moment. After all, he could trust this perfect old servant, whom he remembered. He gave the address.
As he came out of the booth the girl stretched forth an arm to detain him. He stopped.
"I'm sorry I spoke like that," she said. "But I'm so tired! I've been on my feet all day, and everybody's been barking and growling; and if I'd taken in as many nickels as I've passed out in change the boss would be rich."
"Give me a dozen of those roses there." She sold flowers also. "The pink ones. How much?" he asked.
"Two-fifty."
He laid down the money. "Never mind the box. They are for you. Good evening."
The girl stared at the flowers as Ali Baba must have stared at the cask with rubies.
"For me!" she whispered. "For nothing!"
Her eyes blurred. She never saw Hawksley again; but that was of no importance. She had a gentle deed to put away in the lavender of recollection.
Outside Hawksley could see nothing of the man who had bought the cigars. At any rate, further dodging would be useless. He would go directly to his destination. Old Gregor had sent him a duplicate key to the apartment. He could hide there for a day or two; then visit Rathbone's banker at his residence in the night to establish his identity. Gregor could be trusted to carry the wallet and the pouch to the bank. Once these were walled in steel half the battle would

be over. He would have nothing to guard thereafter but his life. He laughed brokenly. Nothing but the clothes he stood in. He never could claim the belongings he had been forced to leave in that hotel back yonder. But there was loyal old Gregor. Somebody would be honestly glad to see him. The poor old chap! Astonishing, but of late he was always thinking in English.

He hailed the first free taxicab he saw, climbed in, and was driven downtown. He looked back constantly. Was he followed? There was no way of telling. The street was alive with vehicles tearing north and south, with frequent stoppage for the passage of those racing east and west. The destination of Hawksley's cab was an old-fashioned apartment house in Eightieth Street.

Gregor would have a meal ready; and it struck Hawksley forcibly that he was hungry, that he had not touched food since the night before. Gregor, valeting in a hotel, pressing coats and trousers and sewing on buttons! Groggy old world, wasn't it? Gregor, pressing the trousers of the hoi polloi! Gregor, who could have sent New York mad with that old Stradivarius of his! But Gregor was wise. Safety for him lay in obscurity; and what was more obscure than a hotel valet?

He did not seek the elevator but mounted the first flight of stairs. He saw two doors, one on each side of the landing. He sought one, stooped and peered at the card over the bell. Conover. Gregor's was opposite. Having a key he did not knock but unlocked the door and stepped into the dark hall.

"Stefani Gregor?" he called, joyously. "Stefani, my old friend, it is I!"

Silence. But that was understandable. Either Gregor had not returned from his labours or he was out gathering the essentials for the evening meal. Judging from the variety of odours that swam the halls of this human warren many suppers were in the process of making, and the top flavour

was garlic. He sniffed pleasurably. Not that the smell of garlic quickened his hunger. It merely sent his thought galloping backward a score of years. He saw Stefani Gregor and a small boy in mountain costume footing it sturdily along the dizzy goat paths of the rugged hills; saw the two sitting on some ruddy promontory and munching black bread rubbed with garlic. Ambrosia! His mother's horror, when she smelt his breath—as if garlic had not been one of her birthrights! His uncle, roaring out in his bull's voice that black bread and garlic were good for little boys' stomachs, and made the stuff of soldiers. Black bread and garlic and the Golden Age!

After he had flooded the hall with light he began a tour of inspection. The rooms were rather bare but clean and orderly. Here and there were items that kept the homeland green in the recollection. He came to the bedroom last. He hesitated for a moment before opening the door. The lights told him why Gregor had not greeted his entering hail.

The overturned reading lamp, the broken chair, the letters and papers strewn about the floor, the rifled bureau drawers—these things spoke plainly enough. Gregor was a prisoner somewhere in this vast city; or he was dead.

Hawksley stood motionless for a space. And he must remain here at least for a night and a day! He would not dare risk another hotel. He could, of course, go to the splendid Rathbone place; but it would not be fair to invite tragedy across that threshold.

A ball of crushed paper at his feet attracted his attention. He kicked it absently, followed and picked it up, his thought on other things. He was aimlessly smoothing it out when an English word caught his eye. English! He smoothed the crumpled sheet and read:

> If you find this it is the will of God. I have been watched for several days, and am now convinced that they have always known I was here but were leaving me alone for

some unknown purpose. I roll this ball because anything folded and left in a conspicuous place would be useless should they come for me. I understand. It is you, poor boy. They are watching me in hopes of catching you, and I've no way to warn you not to come here. It was after I sent you the key that I learned the truth. God bless you and guard you!
STEFANI.

Hawksley tore the note into scraps. Food and sleep. He walked toward the kitchen, musing. What an odd mixture he was! Superficially British, with the British outlook; and yet filled with the dancing blood of the Latin and the cold, phlegmatic blood of the Slav. He was like a schoolmaster with two students too big for him to handle. Always the Latin was dispossessing the Slav or the Slav was ousting the Latin. With fatalistic confidence that nevermore would he look upon the kindly face of Stefani Gregor, alive, he went in search of food.

Not a crust did he find. In the ice-chest there was a bottle of milk—soured. Hungry; and not a crumb! And he dared not go out in search of food. No one had observed his entrance to the apartment, but it was improbable that such luck would attend him a second time.

He returned to the bedroom. He did not turn on the light because a novel idea had blossomed unexpectedly—a Latin idea. There might be food on some window ledge. He would leave payment. He proceeded to the window, throwing up both it and the curtain, and looked out. Ripping! There was a fire escape.

As he slipped a leg over the sill a golden square sprang into existence across the way. Immediately he forgot his foraging instincts. In a moment he was all Latin, always susceptible to the enchantment of beauty.

The distance across the court was less than forty feet. He could see the girl quite plainly as she set about the

preparation of her evening meal. He forgot his danger, his hunger, his code of ethics, which did not permit him to gaze at a young woman through a window.

Alone. He was alone and she was alone. A novel idea popped into his head. He chuckled; and the sound of that chuckle in his ears somehow brought back his resolve to carry on, to pass out, if so he must, fighting. He would knock on yonder window and ask the beautiful lady slavey for a bit of her supper!

Chapter 4

Kitty Conover had inherited brains and beauty, and nothing else but the furniture. Her father had been a famous reporter, the admiration of cubs from New York to San Francisco; handsome, happy-go-lucky, generous, rather improvident, and wholly lovable. Her mother had been a comedy actress noted for her beauty and wit and extravagance. Thus it will be seen that Kitty was in luck to inherit any furniture at all.

Kitty was twenty-four. A body is as old as it is, but a brain is as old as the facts it absorbs; and Kitty had absorbed enough facts to carry her brain well into the thirties.

Conover had been dead twenty years; and Kitty had scarcely any recollections of him. Improvident as the run of newspaper writers are, Conover had fulfilled one obligation to his family—he had kept up his endowment policies; and for eighteen years the insurance had taken care of Kitty and her mother, who because of a weak ankle had not been able to return to the scenes of her former triumphs. In 1915 this darling mother, whom Kitty loved to idolatry, had passed on.

There was enough for the funeral and the cleaning up of the bills; but that was all. The income ceased with Mrs. Conover's demise. Kitty saw that she must give up writing short stories which nobody wanted, and go to work. So she proceeded at once to the newspaper office where her father's name was still a tradition, and applied for a job. It was frankly a charity job, but Kitty was never to know that because she fell into the newspaper game naturally; and when they discovered her wide acquaintance among theatrical celebrities they switched her into the dramatic department, where she had astonishing success as a

raconteur. She was now assistant dramatic editor of the Sunday issue, and her pay envelope had four crisp ten-dollar notes in it each Monday.

She still remained in the old apartment; sentiment as much as anything. She had been born in it and her happiest days had been spent there. She lived alone, without help, being one of that singular type of womanhood that is impervious to the rust of loneliness. Her daily activities sufficed the gregarious instincts, and it was often a relief to move about in silence.

Among other things Kitty had foresight. She had learned that a little money in the background was the most satisfying thing in existence. So many times she and her mother had just reached the insurance check, with grumbling bill collectors in the hall, that she was determined never to be poor. She had to fight constantly her love of finery inherited from her mother, and her love of good times inherited from her father. So she established a bank account, and to date had not drawn a check against it; which speaks well for her will power, an attribute cultivated, not inherited.

Kitty was as pleasing to the eye as a basket of fruit. Her beauty was animated. There was an expression in her eyes and on her lips that spoke of laughter always on tiptoe. An enviable inheritance, this, the desire to laugh, to be searching always for a vent to laughter; it is something money cannot buy, something not to be cultivated; a true gift of the gods. This desire to laugh is found invariably in the tender and valorous; and Kitty was both. Brown hair with running threads of gold that was always catching light; slate-blue eyes with heavy black fringe-Irish; colour that waxed and waned; and a healthy, shapely body. Topped by a sparkling intellect these gifts made Kitty desirable of men.

Kitty had no beau. After the adolescent days beaux ceased to interest her. This would indicate that she was inclined

toward suffrage. Nothing of the kind. Intensely romantic, she determined to await the grand passion or go it alone. No experimental adventures for her. Be assured that she weighed every new man she met, and finding some flaw discarded him as a matrimonial possibility. Besides, her unusual facilities to view and judge men had shown her masculine phases the average woman would have discovered only after the fatal knot was tied. She did not suspect that she was romantical. She attributed her wariness to common sense.

If there is one place where a pretty young woman may labour without having to build a wall of liquid air about her to fend off amatory advances that place is the editorial room of a great metropolitan daily. One must have leisure to fall in love; and only the office boys could assemble enough idle time to call it leisure.

Her desk faced Burlingame's; and Burlingame was the dramatic editor, a scholar and a gentleman. He liked to hear Kitty talk, and often he lured her into the open; and he gathered information about theatrical folks that was outside even his wide range of knowledge.

A drizzly fog had hung over New York since morning. Kitty was finishing up some Sunday special. Burlingame was reading proofs. All day theatrical folks had been in and out of this little ten-by-twelve cubby-hole; and now there would be quiet.

But no. The door opened and an iron-gray head intruded.

"Will I be in the way?"

"Lord, no!" cried Burlingame, throwing down his proofs. "Come along in, Cutty."

The great war correspondent came in and sat down, sighing gratefully.

Cutty was a nickname; he carried and smoked—everywhere they would permit him—the worst-looking and the worst-smelling pipe in Christendom. You may not realize it, but a nickname is a round-about Anglo-Saxon way of telling a

fellow you love him. He was Cutty, but only among his dear intimates, mind you; to the world at large, to presidents, kings, ambassadors, generals, and capitalists he is known by another name. You will find it on the roster of the Royal Geographical; on the title page of several unique books on travel, jewels, and drums; in magazines and newspapers; on the membership roll of the Savage in London and the Lambs in New York. But you will not find it in this story; because it would not be fair to set his name against the unusual adventures that crossed his line of life with that of the young man who wore the tobacco pouch suspended from his neck.

Tall, bony, graceful enough except in a chair, where his angles became conspicuous; the ruddy, weather-bitten complexion of a deep-sea sailor, and a sailor man's blue eye; the brow of a thinker and the mouth of a humourist. Men often call another man handsome when a woman knows they mean manly. Among men Cutty was handsome.

Kitty considerately rose and gathered up her manuscript.

"No, no, Kitty! I'd rather talk to you than Burly, here. You're always reminding me of that father of yours. Best comrade I ever had. You laugh just like him. Did your mother ever tell you that old Cutty is your godfather?"

"Good gracious!"

"Fact. I told your dad I'd watch over you."

"And a fat lot of watching you've done to date," jeered Burlingame.

"Couldn't help that. But I can be on the job until I return to the Balkans."

Kitty laughed joyously and sat down, perhaps a little thrilled. She had always admired Cutty from afar, shyly. Once in a blue moon he had in the old days appeared for tea; and he and Mrs. Conover would spend the balance of the afternoon discussing the lovable qualities of Tommy Conover. Kitty had seen him but twice during the war.

"Every so often," began Cutty, "I have to find listeners. Fact. I used to hate crowds, listeners; but those ten days in an open boat, a thousand miles from anywhere, made me gregarious. I'm always wanting company and hating to go to bed, which is bad business for a man of fifty-two." Cutty's ship had been torpedoed.

To Kitty, with his tired eyes and weather-bitten face, his bony, gangling body, he had the appearance of a lazy man. Actually she knew him to be a man of tremendous vitality and endurance. Eagles when they roost are heavy-lidded and clumsy. She wondered if there was a corner on the globe he had not peered into.

For thirty years he had been following two gods—Rumour and War. For thirty years he had been the slave of cables and telegrams. Even now he was preparing to return to the Balkans, where the great fire had started and where there were still some threatening embers to watch.

Cutty was not well known in America; his reputation was European. He played the game because he loved it, being comfortably fortified with worldly goods. He was a linguist of rare attainments, specializing in the polyglot of southeastern Europe. He came and went like cloud shadow. His foresight was so keen he was seldom ordered to go here or there; he was generally on the spot when the orders arrived.

He was interested in socialism and its bewildering ramifications, but only as an analytical student. He could fit himself into any environment, interview a prime minister in the afternoon and take potluck that night with the anarchist who was planning to blow up the prime minister.

Burlingame, an intimate, often exposed for Kitty's delectation the amazing and colourful facets of Cutty's diamond-brilliant mind. Cutty wrote authoritatively on famous gems and collected drums. He had one of the finest collections of chrysoprase in the world. He loved these semi-precious stones because of their unmatchable,